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General Assembly

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Fifty-fourth session
Item 76 of the preliminary list*
General and complete disarmament

Note verbale dated 22 February 1999 from the Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to inform him that the South African Government has decided to destroy all surplus small arms in possession of the Government rather than sell them. This action is taken in accordance with the Secretary-General's report on small arms (A/52/298 of 27 August 1997), which recommended, *inter alia*, that States should exercise restraint on the transfer of surplus small arms manufactured solely for possession and use by the military and police forces. The report also recommended that all States should consider the possibility of destroying all surplus small arms.

In accordance with its policy on non-proliferation and arms control, in particular on small arms and light weapons proliferation (circulated as A/53/169/Add.3), the South African Government decided that redundant small arms in the possession of the South African Government be destroyed rather than sold on a tender basis as done previously. When destruction takes place it will be public, and media representatives will be invited.

The decision to destroy all redundant small arms underlines the South African Government's grave concern about the proliferation of small arms, which is having a devastating effect on the socio-economic development and reconstruction of civil societies in southern Africa. Such proliferation endangers the democratic pursuits which are presently being consolidated in the region. The availability of uncontrolled surplus small arms after the resolution of various armed conflicts is one of the sources of illicit small arms.

The Permanent Mission would like to suggest that the steps taken by the South African Government could serve as an example for the Secretary-General to encourage other Governments, in particular those from arms manufacturing States, to implement similar policies in pursuit of the Secretary-General's report on small arms. The Permanent Mission wishes to request that the present note, as well as the statement released at the time of the South African Government's decision to destroy all surplus small arms (see annex), be circulated as a document of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly under item 76 of the preliminary list.

* A/54/50.

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Annex

Media statement on the decision by the National Convention Arms Control Committee on the destruction of surplus small arms

The South African Government has decided to destroy all surplus small arms rather than sell them. This was announced on 19 February 1999 by the Chairperson of the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC), Professor Kader Asmal. It follows a meeting of NCACC, at which Government Ministers expressed grave concern about the proliferation of small arms, which is having a devastating effect on the socio-economic development and reconstruction of civil societies in southern Africa. Such proliferation endangers the democratic pursuits which are presently being consolidated in the region. The availability of uncontrolled surplus small arms after the resolution of various armed conflicts is one of the sources of illicit small arms.

The United Nations Secretary-General's report on small arms of 27 August 1997 recommended, among other things, that States should exercise restraint on the transfer of surplus small arms manufactured solely for possession and use by the military and police forces. The report also recommended that all States should consider the possibility of destroying all surplus small arms.

In accordance with the Government's policy on non-proliferation and arms control, NCACC decided that redundant small arms in the possession of the South African Government should be destroyed rather than sold on a tender basis, as done previously. When destruction takes place it will be public, and media representatives will be invited. The legal and technical implications of the destruction of these small arms are presently being considered.

The South African Police Service has already begun the process of its destruction of surplus small arms. On 6 October 1997, the South African Police Service melted down 20 tons of firearms. A total of 4,504 confiscated firearms, including pistols, revolvers, rifles, shotguns and homemade firearms were also destroyed. The commercial value of these arms is estimated to be in excess of R2 million (US$ 330,000). Subsequently the South African Police Service has destroyed an additional 11 tons of confiscated ammunition and 10 tons of confiscated small arms, 9 tons of obsolete/outdated ammunition and 20 tons of redundant/obsolete small arms.

"This decision forms part of the Government's strategy to curtail the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms. The magnitude of the problem is of such a nature that it can only be addressed through appropriate national, regional and international action. We have begun on a national scale in South Africa", said the NCACC Chairperson.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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Items 30 and 76 of the preliminary list*
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 12 March 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the statement of 12 March 1999 by the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the problem of the expansion of NATO (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under the agenda items entitled "General and complete disarmament" and "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe", and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Sergei LAVROV

* A/54/50.

ANNEX

STATEMENT OF 12 MARCH 1999 BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Today, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic officially joined the North Atlantic Alliance. In this connection, we should like to stress that the Russian Federation's position with regard to the expansion of NATO has not changed and remains negative. Expanding the North Atlantic Alliance will not further the strengthening of trust and stability in international relations and, on the contrary, may give rise to new dividing lines. We would not want such a development, and it is not in the interests of the peoples of our continent.

For its part, the Russian Federation has put forward and proposes, as a constructive alternative to expansion, stepping up work on creating a European security architecture that would ensure the interests of all States without exception, both those that are members of one or another military-political alliance as well as those that are not. We believe that the establishment of a reliable system for European security and stability is possible only on a common European basis with unswerving observance of international law and by making use of the potential of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as the most representative and universal common European organization capable of dealing with all the challenges of the twenty-first century - political, economic, military and humanitarian ones. We call upon all the countries concerned to draw up as speedily as possible and adopt at this year's OSCE summit in November a charter for European security - a weighty document that would develop and concretize the vision of a single space for democracy and security, contain practical agreements on the principles governing the European security architecture, mutual relations and cooperation between European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

The question of adapting the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) has become particularly important now after the expansion of NATO. The Russian side believes that the obligation undertaken by the States parties to the Treaty to complete by the end of March work on the key aspects of adapting it to new conditions will be carried out and this very important instrument for stability will maintain its effectiveness.

The Russian side will also continue its active work to make use of the potential of the Founding Act and the Russia-NATO Permanent Joint Council in order to create relations based on true partnership between the Russian Federation and the North Atlantic Alliance and prevent any detriment to the work of forming a single Euro-Atlantic space for stability, democracy and cooperation without dividing lines. We are counting on understanding and reciprocal action on the part of our partners. Only this process, and not a relapse into the logic of the "cold war", can ensure peace and prosperity.

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Fifty-fourth session
Item 76 of the preliminary list*
General and complete disarmament

Letter dated 12 March 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the statement of 10 March 1999 by the official representative of the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the question of adapting the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (see annex).

I should be grateful if the text of this letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the General Assembly under the agenda item entitled "General and complete disarmament".

(*Signed*) S. **Lavrov**

* A/54/50.

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Annex

Statement of 10 March 1999 by the official representative of the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs

During the extensive consultation held in Brussels between the Russian Federation and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), agreement was reached on settling the key problems of adapting the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) by no later than the end of this month. On this basis, the representatives of NATO and the Russian Federation at the Vienna negotiations made, on 9 March 1999, official statements reaffirming their readiness to draw up and adopt within the period specified, together with the other States parties, a document establishing mutually acceptable parameters for such adaptation. The document, in particular, should reflect the agreed approaches to the problems of flank limitations and the strengthening of stability in Central Europe. These questions are fundamental for European security in light of the forthcoming NATO expansion.

The Russian side welcomes the positive movement in the position held by the Alliance's members, which demonstrates their desire to ensure the conditions for successfully completing the process of adapting this document by the Istanbul summit meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It is counting on the support of all States parties for this course of action and their understanding of the importance of the time factor for the Russian Federation. In insisting on the timely settlement of the problems of adapting the CFE Treaty with account taken of the dates for NATO expansion, we are guided by a single approach to the relationship on the part of our society and the legislative and executive authorities with the Alliance.

The CFE Treaty is the foundation of European security. Maintaining and strengthening it is a most important task, which, in order to be carried out, requires, as a minimum, protecting this unique Treaty from inevitable conflict with the new military-political situation on the continent if the negotiations are delayed any further.